

## Statistics of Scientific Procedures on living animals, Great Britain 2011

In the United Kingdom, the welfare of laboratory animals is protected by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Part of the Act (Section 21[7]) requires the Secretary of State to publish annually information on the use of protected animals for experimental or other scientific purposes.

Figures have been collected detailing the number of scientific procedures for many years. The latest report to be published, *Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animal Great Britain 2011*, shows that a peak in scientific procedures occurred in the early 1970s, when over 5.5 million procedures were carried out. After this time there was an overall decline until 2001, when figures dropped to around 2.6 million. Since 2001, however, there has been a gradual increase in the number of procedures performed and this trend has continued for 2011 during which 3.79 million scientific procedures were started, a 2% increase from 2010.

Scientific procedures are carried out on living animals for one of the following primary purposes: fundamental biological research; applied studies — human medicine or dentistry, and veterinary medicine; protection of man, animals or the environment; education and training; forensic enquiries; direct diagnosis; and breeding. In 2011, there was an increase in the number of procedures for: direct diagnosis (+1%), fundamental biological research (+3%), veterinary medicine (+17%) and protection of man, animals or environment (+54%). There was a decrease in the number of procedures carried out in the following categories: education (−31%) and human medicine/dentistry (−8%). The four most commonly used animal species in procedures were mice (71%), fish (15%), rats (7%) and birds (4%). Of the remaining 3%, reptiles and amphibians make up 0.5%, ‘other’ rodents 0.5%, and ‘other’ mammals 2%.

**Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living animals, Great Britain 2011** (July 2012). A4, 52 pages. The Stationary Office: London, UK. Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to: Home Office Statistics, 5th Floor, Peel Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF, UK. ISBN: 978-0-1029-79503. Available online at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/research-statistics/science/>.

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## Educational website on humane endpoints for laboratory animals

In 2006, a CD-ROM on Humane Endpoints in Laboratory Animal Experimentation was released by the Netherlands Association for Laboratory Animal Science to raise awareness of this very important aspect of the use of animals in research. Since this time, a website, which incorporates and expands upon the information available on the CD-ROM, has been made available online through an initiative of the Netherlands Centre Alternative to animal use (NCA).

The website has an ‘open’ section, with unrestricted access for the general public, and a ‘closed’ section, which requires a username and password. Earlier this year it became possible for interested individuals to register online and request access

to the secure area. Upon review, and acceptance, of an individual’s details, a username and password is then supplied. The ‘closed’ section is intended for the following people:

- “Affiliated to an institute performing biomedical research and/or;
- Involved in biomedical research, testing and education;
- Trained as an investigator, animal technician or another position which is closed linked to animal research, testing and education;
- Involved in relevant policy making activities, such as governmental organisations, regulatory bodies, etc; and
- Or up to the decision of the project secretariat”.

The website defines a humane endpoint as: “the earliest indicator in an animal experiment of (potential) pain and/or distress that, within the context of moral justification and scientific endpoints to be met, can be used to avoid or limit pain and/or distress by taking actions such as humane killing or terminating or alleviating the pain and distress”.

An introductory section that is available to all web-users gives a general background on humane-endpoints and provides statistics on animal use in The Netherlands and other EU member states. The website then provides details of the normal physiology and behaviour of rats and mice (the species most commonly used in research) under the following headings: housing, activity, physical factors, social behaviour, senses and communication, nutrition, aberrant behaviour, pain-associated behaviour and physiological parameters. Humane endpoints are then described more fully, including: why humane endpoints should be used; types of humane endpoints; the implementation of humane endpoints in research; and the development and validation of humane endpoints. There are also interesting sections on relevant laws and regulations, links to documents that include material on humane endpoints and links to other, interesting organisations and information resources.

The secure part of the website, which requires a user to log-in, provides more detailed information on: animal behaviour; general and specific clinical signs; assessment of pain and distress; and pathology. More comprehensive information is also provided on the implementation of humane endpoints. Furthermore, logged-in users will have access to an interactive section which provides training and self-test material on various subjects, and allows users to contribute to a secure forum.

The website is available in English, French and Dutch and will be of use to all those interested in learning more about humane endpoints. Through making this information freely available it is hoped that the website will contribute to refining animal experiments by reducing the pain and distress experienced by rats and mice through the correct implementation of humane endpoints.

**Humane Endpoints in Laboratory Animal Experimentation** (2012). The website is an initiative of the Netherlands Centre Alternative to animal use (NCA) and is based on the CD-ROM ‘Humane Endpoints in Laboratory Animal Experimentation’ of the Netherlands Association for Laboratory Animal Science. Website available at: [www.humane-endpoints.info](http://www.humane-endpoints.info).

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